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ABSTRACT

Recent research studies suggest a relationship between an individual's level of competence in the use of language and of nonlinguistic communication and that person's ability to function competently in society. This document reviews the theories and definitions related to the concept of communicative competence, discusses the cognitive and behavioral processes involved, identifies competence as appropriate behavior determined by social judgment, and outlines the attributes and dimensions of communicative competence. Five behavioral dimensions of communication are discussed in terms of the speaker. These include the process of speech communication, interaction process and rule governed behavior, the skills involved in information gathering, information generation, and the language and communication processes. The final portion of the document describes and evaluates the following research strategies: the third-person observation method, the vicarious participant method, and the self report or participant observation method. A four page bibliography is appended. (HAI)

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CURRENT THEORY AND RESEARCH IN SPEECH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES: ISSUES AND METHODS

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INTRODUCTION

The educational process in the United States has come under ever increasing scrutiny in the past decade. Beginning with the "Sputnik" controversy of the late 1950's and moving through the university protests of the late 1960's, the ways and means of American education have come under attack.

As a result of the criticisms stemming from general social concern and from statistics relating to a decline in standardized test scores, many educators have recognized a need to develop more "functional" educational strategies (Williams and Naremore, 1969). The focus appears to be shifting from content or subject matter concerns to the question of "what skills or abilities do students need?" More emphasis is being placed on the identification of what a student should learn in order to function more effectively in different environments and in different situations (Silberman, 1970). The reorientation has led some educators to the concept of competency based education.

In no other field is the importance of practical competencies more important than in speech communication. The purpose of this paper is to relate general notions of competency based education to the speech communication discipline and to call attention to the centrality of speech communication competencies to social well being.

The concept of competency in education requires, for each area of knowledge, the identification of what constitutes competency in that area and the identification of educational methods that may help the student achieve a competent level of skill in that area. Attempts are generally made to tie the competency levels to specific behaviors that enable the student to function more effectively in the environment.

A variety of scholars (Argyle and Kendon, 1967; Reusch, 1955; Duncan, 1968; Dance and Larson, 1972, and others) suggest that a relationship exists between an individual's ability to use the communication process and his ability to function in society. Accepting this premise as valid, it may be argued that in order for a person to function competently in society, that person needs to achieve a certain level of competence in the use of language and non-language behavior for the purpose of communication. This competence has been termed communicative competence. The communication competence paradigm seems to have the potential to bridge the gap between theory and performance in everyday social settings (Wiemann, 1976).

Communication competence is a relatively new concept. Although several scholars (cf. Argyle and Kendon, 1967; Argyris, 1962; Goffmann, 1959) have dealt with communicative competence in various ways, the term first gained wide exposure in the writings of Hymes (1971). He used the term to refer to the knowledge an individual has about the use of language in communication. Since Hymes, a number of individuals have written about communication competence, but have utilized a variety of definitions. This lack of definitional and theoretical consistency, while common to concepts in their developmental stages, points to a need for further clarification and elaboration of this concept if a useful theory is to be developed.

By examining theoretical and conceptual issues relating to communicative competence and reviewing relevant research, we hope to provide a rationale for the further development of the construct.

THEORY

The purpose of this section is to attempt to further clarify the concept of communicative competence. Four issues that appear to effect theory development are examined: (1) the lack of definitional consistency; (2) the manner in which a person may "possess" competence; (3) the way in which communication competence is distinguished from similar concepts; and (4) the constitution of communication competence, its attributes and dimensions.

DEFINING COMPETENCE

The orderly development of any new theory demands clear, generally acceptable definitions for the key words associated with that theory. A review of current literature suggests, however, that "communicative competence" does not enjoy such a definition. The difficulty appears to stem from the wide range of definitions of the word "competence" found in the literature, which seem to fall into two categories, cognitive and behavioral.

Cognitive definitions. The definitions that fall into this class generally conceive of "competence" as being a mental phenomenon distinct and separated from behavior, as characterized by the linguistic distinction between competence and performance. Rubin (1977) provides an example of this usage:

> Namath is competent to be quarterback, it is just that he chases women too much.

Here competence is indicative of potential performance or capability. Namath has the potential to be a good quarterback, but factors exist that inhibit his performance. Competence, in this instance, is separated from behavior.

Chomsky (1965) has been the most influential contributor to the cognitive conception of competence. In his conception of linguistic competence, Chomsky concentrated on the nature of linguistic knowledge and avoids factors of performance. By avoiding behavioral concerns, Chomsky attempts to describe the type of knowledge the ideal speaker-listener supposedly has in order to create

and understand the sentences of the language. Linguistic competence is generally defined as the individual's knowledge of the structure of the language. Language behavior is subsequently developed by Chomsky and others under the concept of performance (Chomsky, 1965; Smithworth and Daswani, 1974).

This conception of competence appears in other writings on communication competence. Rubin (1977) states that "competence theories are not about behavior at all, but rather pertain to the cognitive structure underlying behavior (p. 15)." Pylyshyn (1972) supports this position by suggesting that

> ...(a competence theory is) committed to the belief that underlying observed behavior is a more perfect mathematical structure. Indeed, its concern is not with behavior per se, but rather with how information about the world is presented in a person's mind which make it possible for him to perform the way he does or the way he could perform under a variety of circumstances (p. 548).

For Chomsky, Pylyshyn, Rubin, and others, the goal of competence theories is not the explanation of events or processes, but rather the discovery of the cognitive structure and mental representations that underlie events. This type of competence theory seeks to remove the limitations of both performance and of individuals so that an idealized, finite set of formal rules that underlie behavior may be developed. In the realm of communicative competence, the goal then would be to develop a set of formalized rules that would act as a generative source for specific communication events.

An understanding and accurate description of the non-behavioral, i.e., cognitive, aspects of the communication process is necessary for a complete understanding of the communicative behavior of individuals. But is this understanding sufficient? Should communication competence theory be limited to this cognitive dimension, to the finite set of formal rules that underlie behavior? We think not.

Behavioral definitions. The second category of definitions includes specific reference to actual communicative behavior. Rubin (1977) again provides an example of this type of usage:

> Namath is one competent quarterback and worth every cent he is getting.

The above statement indicates that Namath has mastered the art of quarterbacking and can demonstrate that ability in the appropriate setting. Namath's skills (competence) are observable by anyone.

A behavioral view of competence has its roots more in common usage than in developed theory. General societal usage is reflected in this definition: "having suitable or sufficient skill, knowledge, experience, etc." (Stein and Urdang, 1971). Some scholars tie competence specifically to effective behavior. Argyris (1965) states that "the competence in a living organism means its fitness or ability to carry on those transactions with the environment which result in its maintaining itself, growing, and flourishing" (p. 59). This notion is supported by White (1959) who maintained that competence refers to an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment.

Writers in communicative competence also place emphasis on the behavioral aspect of competence. Hymes (1971) defined communication competence as

> ...the most general term for the speaking and hearing capabilities of a person. Competence is understood to be dependent on two things: (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use. (p. 16 parentheses in original)

In this instance, Hymes' view of competence is an expansion of Chomsky's use. Hymes believes that performance (behavior) also has its own underlying knowledge. He argues that rather than limiting competence to grammatical concerns, it needs to be expanded to the entire sphere of abilities manifested in speech. Competence remains (as in Chomsky's use) underlying knowledge, but is expanded to include all the aspects of knowledge that effect communicative behavior.

Ricillo (1974) summarizes Hymes' view. "Linguistic competence is knowledge of the language and communication competence is knowledge for knowing when and how to use the utterances of a language" (p. 108).

Communicative competence, however, is more than mere use of language. Allen and Brown (1976) conclude:

> ...communication competence, unlike linguistic competence, involves awareness of the transactions that occur between people. Competence in this perspective, is tied to actual performance of the language in social situations. (p. 248)

Wiemann (1977) provides a comprehensive definition of communicative competence, one not limited to language usage:

> (communicative competence is) the ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he may successfully accomplish his (her) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (her) fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation. (p. 198)

Larson, Backlund, Redmond and Barbour (1978) also use a behavioral definition of communicative competence. "The ability of an individual to demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate communicative behavior in a given situation. (n.p.)" Here, competence is tied not only to language use, but to the social situation or context in which language is used, as well as the communicator's goals for interacting. This view of competence, in contrast to the cognitive view, does not seek an idealized set of rules, but a conception of competence that centers on the relationships of communicators.

Discussion. A strong case can be made for both views of "competence." While the goals of a theory of communicative competence are not clear or agreed upon, the primary consideration appears to be the need to understand the communication abilities necessary for adequate functioning in general society. Many scholars have concentrated on how to make the study of communicative competence useful to the individual. Hymes (1971) supports this concentration and criticizes linguists for their lack of concern for functional use:

> ...the lack of socio-cultural factors in linguistic theory is more than just a legitimate simplifying device of the sort which any scientific theory demands. It appears to reveal an ideological aspect of the modern standpoint; that underlying structure is taken as an endpoint in itself and linguistic use is devalued. This is in contrast to classical antiquity, when structure was a means to use, and grammar subordinate to rhetoric. (p. 5)

Allen and Brown (1976) underscore the significance of this function in communication studies with reference to the educational process. They suggest

> ...1) that functional speech communication behaviors are of such crucial significance that they must be emphasized progressively throughout the school experience and 2) that our nation's schools have largely ignored the functional communication needs of children and youth. (p. v)

While not conclusive, this review of conceptualizations of competence of the work in communicative competence has been undertaken with the goal in mind of creating a better understanding of actual communicative behavior.

If one accepts this as a goal of a theory of communicative competence, then a broad definition is needed. To be theoretically and pragmatically meaningful, any conceptualization of competence must include both behavioral and non-behavioral dimensions, and include all the critical factors that influence communicative behavior.

POSSESSION OF COMPETENCE

The potential utility of the approach described above can be illustrated by a discussion of a second issue facing a theory of communication competence. This issue concerns the manner in which an individual possesses communication competence. As with the previous issue, current views are overlapping and sometimes contradictory. Rubin (1977) in describing a cognitive view of competence, holds that "strictly speaking, individuals do not have competence (p. 14)." Writers in a more behavioral view use a wide range of terms to indicate possession, including knowledge, skill, ability, awareness, use and performance. Is communication competence a skill? a body of knowledge? an ability?

For both theory and educational purposes, the level on which the individual possesses competence must be determined.

One aspect of this issue is the question of intent. Does a person need to make a conscious decision about what he will or will not do in order to be judged communicatively competent? Or is the exhibition of competent behavior sufficient evidence of the possession of competence? In approaching this issue, one may look at the difference between knowledge, skill, and behavior.

Scheffler (1965) discusses this distinction. He divided ability into subclasses of "facility" and "critical skill." Facilities are seen as automatic behavior that are not processed cognitively. Critical skills are acquired through training and are improved by practice requiring strategic judgment. Critical skills require conscious knowledge while facilities do not.

Scheffler differentiates between "knowing that" as a propositionally based term and "knowing how" as a procedural term. For Scheffler,

> 'knowing how to' represents the possession of a skill, a trained capacity, a competence, or a technique. We discussed skills earlier and distinguished them from traits, habits, or propensities, as well as from attainments--i.e., appreciation and understanding. Certainly having a skill is also quite different from knowing <u>that</u> the skill is such and such. A person might well have all the relevant information concerning some skill without having the skill itself, and conceivably, he might be skilled without having any given piece of information concerning the skill in question, though it is unlikely he would lack all relevant information (p. 92).

For Scheffler, skills are the connections between knowledge and behavior. Recalling the discussion of communication competence by Hymes (1971) and noting his emphasis on language use in interaction, perhaps proficiency in skills, as described by Scheffler, would be what is required for the manifestation of communication competence.

Polyani (1958) gives a description of how cognitive rules that underlie skills are determined. This description may be applicable to the relationship of knowledge and skill to communication competence. He states that

> ...the premises of a skill cannot be discovered focally, prior to its performance, not even understood if explicitly stated by others, before ourselves have experienced its performance, whether by watching it or by engaging in it ourselves. In performing a skill we are therefore acting on certain premises of which we are focally ignorant, but which we know subsidiarily as part of our mastery of that skill, and which we may get to know focally by analyzing the way we achieve success (or what we believe to be success) in the skill in question. The rules of success which we thus derive can help us to improve our skill and to teach it to others (p. 162).

Polyani points out that the cognitive aspects of a skill are derived solely from observing behavior (our own or that of others). Thus a theory of communication competence must be grounded in the observation of behavior. Both knowledge and skill, as described by Scheffler and Polyani, allow one to "function." If the level of knowledge and skill is sufficiently high, then one may be able to infer that the person is competent. If these skills are in the area of communication, then one would be able to make statements that would allow one to infer the individual's communication competence. As to how the individual may possess communication competence, the individual needs both to know and to know how. These two aspects of knowing may exist both at the overt and the covert levels. The individual possesses competence at a number of different levels. A theory of communicative competence must clearly describe these different levels so that they may be ultimately applied to educational settings.

RECOGNIZING COMPETENCE

The third issue concerns the identification of the phenomenon of competence. Dubin (1969), in his discussion of theory building maintains that a theory must be built on observable and distinct phenomena. In the case of communication competence, what is the phenomenon under observation? How is it recognized? Three points are relevant here: 1) competence as social judgment, 2) criteria, and 3) educational implications.

Social Judgment. It is readily apparent that individuals make judgment about the communication competence of other individuals. In middle-class North America, if a person were asked, "what time is it?" and the answer ca back "Tuesday," that person is likely to be judged as less competent than s one who could give the correct time. This notion of social judgment appear in research on communicative competence. Krauss and Glucksberg (1969), Ric (1974), Wiemann (1977a), and Backlund (1977) all view communication compete as a socially judged phenomena. In these studies, judges evaluated subject communication behavior on the degree to which that behavior met situational and relational demands. If the subject was seen as responding appropriate to the message, then he/she was judged as having a degree of competence. T aspect of social judgment appears to be an unavoidable dimension of communi tive competence. For even if one hews to the cognitive definition of compe tence, one is still forced to infer competence from "performance data." Assuming then that communicative competence needs to be treated as a social judgment phenomenon, the question then rearises, by what criteria are these judgments made? The criterion most commonly referred to is "appropriatenes Appropriateness of what will be taken up explicitly in our discussion of dimensions of competence, to follow.

Criteria. Appropriateness as a determiner of the presence of competen appears in some definitions of communicative competence (Backlund, 1977; Hymes, 1971; Wiemann, 1977a; and Wrather, 1976). Appropriateness is by no means the only evaluative term associated with competence. Other definitio focus on accuracy, effectiveness, or the achievement of personal goals.

Appropriateness generally refers to the ability of an interactant to m the basic contextual requirements of the situation. These contextual requi ments include three: (1) The verbal context, consisting of appropriateness

wording, of statements, and of topic; (2) the relationship context, referring to the type and style of messages appropriate to a particular relationship; (3) the environmental context, consisting of the effects of the physical environment and the symbolic environment, i.e., a church, a bar, a classroom, etc. Appropriateness then can be seen as the ability of the interactant to meet the contextual requirements of the communicative context so that normative expectations and situational proprieties (Goffman, 1963) are maintained.

Educational Implications. The educational implications of appropriateness are numerous; we will discuss the most important here. It is relatively obvious, as Hymes (1971) suggests, that judgments of appropriateness differ across speech communities and from situation to situation. Individuals may exhibit different levels of competence across different situations. Speech communication educators would be faced with the task of 1) determining what constituted appropriate behavior in innumerable situations, and 2) devising educational strategies designed to teach children how to communicate in those situations in an appropriate manner.

This problem may be dealt with by referring back to the conception of competence suggested earlier, viewing competence as a combination of knowledge and skill. Instead of attempting to directly assess a person's communicative competence, attempts can be made to assess the probability of acting in a competent (appropriate) manner. Thus one goal of a theory of communicative competence is prediction. The question would be phrased as follows. Is it possible to predict the probability of a person acting competently by assessing his knowledge and skill in various aspects of the communication process? If the answer is "yes," what are those aspects of communicative behavior that allows a person to be seen as acting in a competent manner? What are the factors that account for the variance in the judgment of competence? By

identifying those areas of knowledge and skill possessed by the individual that account for variance in the perception of competence, a set of educational strategies may be devised. These would be designed to increase the knowledge and skill of students in these areas and thus increase their probability of acting competently in a given situation. These areas of knowledge and skill are discussed in the following section.

DIMENSIONS

The question of dimensions is important because by naming a behavioral dimension, the researcher (or theorist or educator) is saying that variations in behavior along this dimension are crucial to one's judgments of communicative behavior. Thus the dimensions of communicative competence serve as operational definitions of competence and inform testing and measurement strategies. The communication process is highly complex and a wide range of factors may contribute to the perception of communicative competence. Various scholars have proposed sets of functions, skills, and/or knowledge areas that can be seen as the more specific dimensions of communicative competence. These dimensions need to be clearly delineated. General conceptions of communication competence are provided by a number of sources. Weinstein (1969) gives a sense of the skills involved when he discusses interpersonal competence:

> Skill at establishing and maintaining desired identities both for one's self and for others, is pivotal in being interpersonally competent. This skill is dependent in turn on three variables. First, the individual must be able to take the role of the other accurately, he must be able to correctly predict the impact that various lines of action will have on alter's definition of the situation. This is what is meant by empathy if we strip the concept of its affective overtones. Second, the individual must possess a large and varied repertoire of lines of action. Third, the individual must possess the intrapersonal resources to be capable of employing effective tactics in situations where they are appropriate.

Wang (1973) describes very similar aspects of verbal communication skills:

> ...differences found in young children's verbal communication skills are attributed to more than just differences in such linguistic qualities as syntactic structure, vocabulary, and intelligibility. The differences in communication skills are strongly influenced by such factors as the child's ability to take the listener's role, his ability to order and classify relevant information, the nature and amount of feedback information supplied by the listener, and the appropriateness of the response of the speaker to the feedback (p. 1).

Wiemann (1977b) suggests that Mehrabian's (1972) three-dimensional space for characterizing nonverbal behavior may be the most parsimonious dimension system. Mehrabian's dimensions are: 1) affiliation, 2) potency, and 3) responsiveness. His system makes sense in terms of the dimensions most commonly found in the research reported here.

These three examples illuminate the type of skill and knowledge the individual may need to possess in order to function in a communicatively competent manner. The need exists, however, to become even more specific in the ordering of these factors. A review of the dimensions proposed by various authors suggests that these dimensions may be divided into five categories: 1) dimension related to the functions of speech communication, 2) dimensions related to the process of a communicative event, 3) dimensions related to interaction, 4) dimensions related to the specific skills of the individual, and 5) dimensions related to the developmental processes of communication. The five categories are presented as an inventory of dimensions proposed by various authors. This inventory is not elaborated upon, but presented to give the reader an idea of the variety and diversity of the dimensions (variable and factors) associated with communication competence.

Functions. The first of the categories concerns functions of speech communication. It might be noted here that the word "function" itself also has been used in different ways. Consequently, the word function as used in this paper, includes a broad range of definitions. A review of writings

concerning the functions of speech communication and of language yields a list that includes linking, mentation, and regulation (Dance and Larson, 1972); informing, controlling, feeling, ritualizing, and imagining (Allen and Brown, 1976); ideational and relational (Tough, n.d.); and instrumentation, regulation, interaction, personal, heuristic, imaginative, representation, and information (Halliday, 1973). The apparent point here seems to be that speech communication may serve a number of functions for the individual who uses language. It might be argued then that the competent communicator would have the ability to use speech and language in performing each of these functions as the individual and the situation require.

Process. Speech communication is seen by many as a process, and this process can be broken down into stages (Dance and Larson, 1976). If it is claimed that communication competence deals with actual communication interaction in real settings, then a theory must account for the individual's performance in each of the stages. For example, Allen and Brown (1976) take the view that communicative competence is behaviorally oriented and bound to the situation. They suggest seven stages or steps in the communication process as it pertains to the individual: 1) the repertoire of knowledge, skill, and attitudes from which an individual draws in a communicative event; 2) analysis, determining from the communication situation which communicative behavior to use; 3) the goal or function applying to the situation; 4) selection of the actual communicative behavior to be used in the situation; 5) implementing the behavior; 6) evaluation of the effect of the behavior; and 7) adapting subsequent behavior to the feedback received. Thayer (1968) followed a similar pattern. He included four elements, information acquisition, information processing, information generation, and information dissemination. The point here is that the competent communicator needs to have the skills to be

able to move through each of these elements in an optimal manner to insure appropriate communicative behavior.

Interaction. A third category of dimensions concerns aspects related to the interaction process. The factor most frequently discussed concerning interaction and communicative competence is interaction management or rule-governed behavior. A wide variety of research (for example, Mueller, 1972; Rodnick and Wood, 1973; Fogel, 1976; Rushing, 1976; Ruben, 1976; Wiemann, 1977a,b) all discuss the importance of interaction management and rule governed behavior in everyday interaction. Argyle (1969) listed two general interaction skills that relate to this point: 1) the ability to establish and sustain a smooth and easy pattern of interaction, and 2) the ability to maintain control of the interaction without dominating. Wiemann (1977a) gave a number of examples of social rules. These included such items as: 1) interruptions of the speaker are discouraged; 2) one person talks at a time; 3) speaker turns must be interchanged; 4) frequent and lengthy pauses should be avoided, and 5) the listener should be perceived as devoting full attention to the encounter. Awareness of the social rules under which one communicates appears to be essential to the competent functioning of an individual. Ruben (1976) also refers to "display of respect" as necessary to smooth interaction. A further interaction variable is suggested by Feingold (1977) who stated "the effective communicator will be other oriented" (p. 62). Interaction management is concerned with the "procedural" aspects that structure and maintain an interaction. The performance of these aspects will have a direct bearing on the social judgment of competence.

In addition the communicator style research conducted by Norton and his colleagues (Norton, 1976; Norton & Miller, 1975; Norton & Pettegrew, 1976; Miller, 1976) should be of interest to researchers investigating competence.

In fact, Berger (1977) contends that communicative competence and communicator style are conceptually linked in that judgments of competence are the consequences of variations in communicator style. Norton (1976) has identified nine style variables: (1) dominant--which is the best predictor of communicator image; (2) dramatic; (3) animated; (4) open; (5) contentious; (6) relaxed; (7) friendly; (8) attentive; and (9) impression leaving. These style variables obviously have considerable overlap with various behavioral dimensions investigated under the competence rubric.

Skill. The fourth category that can be identified is the area of skill based specifically in the individual. In the second category described earlier, the process of communication was divided into stages. The fourth category may be seen as describing the skill necessary to support that process. The first of that process concerns the gathering of information by the individual from the other and from the environment in order to form a response. Skills that might effect that information gathering process include listening, nonverbal sensitivity, social insight (role-taking), willingness to communicate, and open mindedness. Skills related to the processing and evaluation of information might include reasoning ability and critical thinking ability. Skills associated with information generation might include grammatical correctness, appropriate language behavior, appropriate nonverbal behavior, self-disclosure, expressed empathy, etc. Skills of this type may be the ones necessary for communicatively competent behavior.

Developmental Processes. The final category is related to language and communication development processes. The individual learns to communicate, and the learning process generally occurs in stages. Developmental sequences have received a great deal of attention from researchers in speech communication, language development, sociology, etc. Some examples from these discussions

indicate that this too, is a rich source of possible material for a theory of communicative competence. Brown (1976) identifies six developmental processes that appear to be associated with communicative competence. These six are interaction strategies, role-taking, play, referential communication, reasoning, and persuasibility. In a description of a more specific developmental process, Labov (1965) describes six steps in a process of adapting to standard communication codes. These six steps include (1) acquisition of basic grammar, (2) adaption of local vernacular, (3) recognition of social significance of different dialects, (4) adaption of speech to meet formal situations, (5) adaption of standard speech consistently, and (6) use of full range of speech skills. The progress of recognizing and conforming to language norms indicates a level of communication competence (Mead, 1977). While not exhaustive, these examples can be seen as representative of a fifth class of dimensions that can be associated with a theory of communication competence.

These five areas appear to cover the range of dimensions proposed in the study of communication competence. If a theory of communication competence is to be developed that accounts for knowledge and behavior in everyday communication situations, then each of these areas will need to be considered.

RESEARCH

This section of the article will briefly describe research strategies in communicative competence and report research results.

RESEARCH STRATEGIES

The research strategies most commonly used to study communicative competence can be classified in three very general categories: "third person" observation, vicarious participation, and actual participation (including self-report). A brief look at each strategy will illustrate their strengths and weaknesses.

The third-person observation method employs untrained observers as judges of others' competence (cf. Harris, 1977; Wiemann, 1977a). Most commonly the observers are strangers to those they are observing and are not provided an opportunity to interact with the people whom they are judging. In fact, such interaction has become increasingly impossible as video tape becomes the preferred medium of this type of research.

The strengths of third-person observation revolve around its facilitation of gathering a large number of observations (judgments) economically. This is especially true when video tape is used. Observers can either watch "natural" interactions or--again, especially when video tape is used--an experimentally contrived interaction. The fact that the observers do not, will not and cannot know and interact with those they are observing is the principal drawback to this method. And, for all its advantages, video tape makes the situation observed even further from real life communicative experiences than does "field" or laboratory observation.

The vicarious participant method is at the same time more real and more artificial than third-person techniques. Commonly, subjects are asked to imagine an ideal type and rate him/her ("How would an effective communicator

handle this. . ."); or they are asked to imagine someone they actually know and rate them ("Think of the worst communicator you know. . ."). (Cf. Feingold, 1976; Fogel, 1976; and Kelly & Chase, 1977).

This method offers a measure of realism unavailable in the third-person method without a loss in the economy of administration to large samples. This realism is especially evident in instances when subjects are asked to rate others whom they interact with regularly. An important drawback to this methodology is that it is impossible for the researcher to determine exactly what behaviors of the rated other contributed to the rating. Knowing that empathy, for example, is considered an important characteristic of competent communicators is only half the necessary information; the other half, of course, is knowing how competent communicators communicate empathy. A final characteristic of the vicarious participant method, which should go down in both the strengths and weaknesses columns, is that since each subject carries the stimulus material around in his or her head, it is impossible to determine how comparable their evaluations are on any given measure. On the positive side, the researcher gets the broadest possible view of the dimensions under study; on the other hand, the similarity of the behavioral referents of the subjects is quite problematic.

The final type of research strategy discussed is the participant-observation or self-report method. Here the researcher either sends confederates into "natural" situations to make observations while acting as if they really belonged in the situation (cf. Ruben, 1976); or the researcher asks the members of an intact group to report on the past communication behaviors of the members of the group (cf. Wiemann, 1977b); or the researcher asks people to report on their own past or typical communication behavior (cf. Norton, 1976). A further variation of participant observer research was used by Backlund (1977). In this research, subjects rated each other and were additionally rated by trained observers.

Realism is the strength of these approaches to the study of competence. Actual "real life" behavior is being evaluated. And the closer our research is to naturally occuring behavior, the more faith we can have in the validity of our science. The question that researchers using this strategy must address, however, is to what extent the intervention of another person modifies the behavior of the person being rated. This is of obvious concern when a confederate is employed by the researcher, but is still a concern when the researcher asks for evaluations of members of an on-going group by those very members. Situational, environmental and task contingencies--as well as the behavior of the other group members--will influence a particular target's behavior. Consequently, we may find ourselves uncertain of how "characteristic" of any given group member this behavior is.

More could be said about the strengths and weaknesses of each of these three research strategies. The purpose here is not to do a thorough methodological critique, but rather to highlight frequently-used research strategies. We do not want to leave the impression that one of these strategies is preferrable to the others; that is patently not the case. Various research situations and goals will call for a variety of methods.

RESEARCH RESULTS

No researcher in communicative competence (to this date) has been able to give a clear picture of the communicant's behavior associated with communicative competence. Yet in spite of divergent approaches to and definitions of communication competence, research results show a surprising consistency of results.

Three variables have shown the most consistent relationship to communication competence. These are empathy, behavioral flexibility, and interaction management. The most clearly crucial aspect of communicative competence is

empathy (including affiliation and support). Backlund (1977), Feingold (1977), Kelly and Chase (1977), Norton (1976), Ruben (1976) and Wiemann (1977a, b) have all identified empathy in one form or another as a dimension of communicative competence. Empathy, affiliation, and support seem to be closely aligned with Mehrabian's affiliation dimension. Behavioral flexibility (adaptation) also emerged in several of the studies reviewed here (Feingold, 1977; Ruben, 1976; Rushing, 1976; Wiemann, 1977a, b) and seems to be related to power in terms of control. A third dimension which has received support from several studies is interaction management (Harris, 1977; Ruben, 1976; Rushing, 1976; Wiemann, 1977a, b). Interaction management has several components which indicate either power or general responsiveness to the other (or both). This convergence on a small number of dimensions is encouraging, especially in light of the variety of research strategies and methodologies employed.

Other research done in the past two years (for a complete review of earlier research, the reader is referred to Allen and Brown, 1976; and Wiemann, 1975, 1977a) has indicated a number of variables associated with what different authors have termed communicative competence. Below are brief summaries of this research.

Wiemann (1977a) proposed a model of competence composed of (1) affiliation/support, (2) empathy, (3) social relaxation, (4) behavioral flexibility, and (5) interaction management. A partial test of the model revealed that the five dimensions were highly interrelated and could profitably be treated as a single dimension. The first factor in a four factor analytic solution accounted for 82.8% of the variance.

Kelly and Chase (1977) identified three dimensions of competence, which emerged in two factor analytic studies: (1) empathy--accounting for 20% of the variance in each study; (2) task completion; and (3) activity. One

additional variable was identified in each study--need for achievement in one study and physical attractiveness in the other. In both studies, only 35% of the variance was accounted for, suggesting that additional salient competence dimensions were not tapped by their measuring instrument.

Harris (1977) found that "competent" interaction management produced greater attraction to target persons by her subjects than did "incompetent" interaction management, when exhibited by these same targets.

Backlund (1977), using both self-report and "expert" observations, identified two dimensions of competence: (1) social insight and (2) open mindedness. However, a factor analysis revealed that these dimensions accounted for less than 8% of the variance of his subjects' evaluations, an indication that additional dimensions of competence went untapped in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been our purpose here to explicate theoretical issues related to the communicative competence construct and to briefly report some recent research bearing on both the theoretical and pragmatic issues involved in any consideration of construct. It is clear to us that we are not at a point of concluding, but at a point of beginning. Theorists and researchers have provided a basic understanding of communicative competence (although there is much more to be done). Educators must now seize on this understanding to develop curricula which will prepare students to meet the exigencies of day-to-day social communication situations.

It seems obvious that if any type of education is to be successful, students must possess minimal communication skills in order to receive, understand, and apply the substance of their lessons. With the increasing appreciation of the utility of competency-based instruction, it is all the more obvious that communicative competencies are of primary importance, for it is through communicative behavior that people make their competencies known.

In summary, educators should be aware of the importance of competent communication behavior to their students. And we do not mean just competence in public speaking situations, but competence across all socially salient communication situations--including and particularly in the classroom itself. The type of communicative competence we are discussing requires that students both know and know how. The implication of this for curriculum development is clear: experiential learning across a variety of situations is needed. Research indicates that these experiential situations should, at the very least, facilitate learning to be empathic, to adapt one's behavior from situation to situation, and to manage a conversation in a mutually satisfying manner.

Our appraisal is that the communicative competence concept, while still in its developmental stages, provides a theoretical model for guiding education in practical communication skills. The issue, yet to be resolved or even adequately addressed, is can we adapt this model for application in our schools.

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